9: Senfft--14
116, 761, 152

(1903) 1904

Woleaians
Woleai

As depressing as it is to see a gay people surrounded by graves it impressed me as even worse that they do not seem to realize what death is. They speak with laughter about their dead, with laughter did they show me the hopelessly sick and the efforts of the paralyzed man who was painfully trying to get up with the help of two sticks in order to demonstrate the violent trembling of his sturdy body was accompained by the laughter of the people around him. There is no doubt that this blunt attitude towards death is due to the accumulation of misfortune which these people experience.

"The malevolent dead, as we shall soon see are universally accepted as the agents of death, rather than Solal and Aluelap. Furthermore, within this theory, Arogeligar, who is the specialist in matters of death has a variant interpretation. Aluelap decides when a person is to die. He informs Lolal of his intention, and Solal informs Metha, who then removes the person's Metha, who then removes the person's soul, thus causing his death."

28: Spiro--60-61 (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 157, 761 Ifalik

"On the other hand death wishes do exist, as the TAT reveals. A great number of people perceived the human figures in the pictures as dead. This of course, is not [61] the only possible interpretation of such perception. Dead people may not only be hostile death wishes, but may be personal identifications of the people with innert, lifeless, people, as projections of their own inner psychic life. This will bear much scrutiny before a final conclusion is drawn. Apriori, I suspect, that both are operative here, depending upon the person.

In either event it would be important to know whether the people harbor death wishes against others. My field work, on this point, was sloppy, indeed. I have one notation in my field notes, dated one month after our arrival, in which Tom had informed me that if a man harbors death wishes against another, a benevolent alus will punish him by retaliating in kind. This note was tucked away in the corpus of field notes, and forgotten. I have no idea, therefore, whether this is a personal or a cultural belief, nor what the incidence of such phantasies are, nor, if this is a cultural belief, how many deaths are attributed to this fact."

28: Spiro--96 [3] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 869, 761 Ifalik

"If the culture does provide answers in traditional terms, the parents do transmit the information to the children. Causes of death, the informants said, are not asked in the abstract. That is, children do not ask about the cause of death, but do ask the cause of the death of 'X'. If the person had been ill, his death is attributed to illness. If he had died suddenly, they admit candidly that they do not know."

28: Spiro--137 [2] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 761, 775 Ifalik

"Though old age is experience differentially, there is no dispute about death. Death is not welcomed, despite the native eschatology, which assures every one of continued life after death. Any attempt to obtain direct attitudes on death are, of course, a waste of time, since the responses would reveal only superficial, rational attitudes, rather than the deep seated, emotional feelings. The few individuals to whom I put the question, however, responded with: people are afraid to die, because they no longer remain in Ifaluk, and are consequently separated from their families."

28: Spiro--138 (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 761 Ifalik

"There are five physical signs, which the natives employ as symptoms of death. The eyes do not blink; when opened, only the whites of the eyes are seen, the pupils having receeded under the eyelids; absence of movement in the belly which indicates lack of breathing; the mouth hangs opened, but the teeth are clenched tight; the body exudes excreta."

41: Bates & Abbott N-5 (1953) 1958
OR21 Woleai OR21
Ifaluk

Katelu where Maur's spirit lingered; there was a tiny, thatched "god house" in the Valul household area on Falalap; and an immaculate, sanded circular altar as part of the Weluar household area. We called Arueligar the "high priest" because he had the highest ecclesiastical authority on the island, officiating at the few religious ceremonies we observed. Husky, handsome Truesai was his designated successor.

Ted, both in 1948 and in 1953, devoted much time to collecting notes on religious beliefs. He felt that these beliefs were steadily weakening, that he could notice a difference in this respect between his 1948 and 1953 visits. The gods, however, were still with us in 1953; alus, spirits, who haunted certain places, governed various natural events, and interfered for good or evil in the affairs of men. Ted collected a list of nine high gods, and of dozens of lesser spirits. He found, for instance, twenty-seven different alus concerned with different matters in connection with navigation and canoe building—though these, to be sure, are basic activities, much subject to divine guidance in any maritime culture.

My impression, however, based mostly on Ted's writings, notes and comments, is that the Ifalukians were far from having an organized theology. The accounts of divine affairs that Ted got from Arueligar and from the chiefs did not always agree; and most people apparently gave little thought to such matters, leaving them to the chiefs and the specialists. The alus were present, all right, but accepted as a part of the natural order of things: the spirits that every folk find in the world around them.

The vast majority of the alus were spirits of the dead. No one died while I was on Ifaluk, but Ted and Mel Spiro observed four deaths during their 1948 stay. They have described these in their book on Ifaluk: the intense preoccupation on the part of friends and relatives with trying to save a seriously ill person by every natural or supernatural means, the nightly wailing chants, the great seriousness surrounding possible death, and the abrupt relaxation of this seriousness once death has occurred, once the alus has left the body. They ascribe this attitude to the firm belief in the continuity of the soul.

The body of the dead, however, is given ceremonial treatment: the face is painted red, a new loin-cloth or skirt is put on, and then the